

A
DESCRIPTION
OF
ALNWICK CASTLE,
IN
NORTHUMBERLAND.

EXTRACTED FROM
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General

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ALNWICK - CASTLE, one of the principal seats of the great family of PERCY, earls of Northumberland, is situated on the south side of the river Alne, on an elevation that gives great dignity to its appearance, and in ancient times rendered it a most impregnable fortress. It is believed to have been founded in the time of the Romans, although no part of the original structure is now remaining. But when part of the Dungeon or Castle-keep was taken down to be repaired some years ago, under the present walls were discovered the foundation of other buildings, which lay in a different direction from the present, and some of the stones appeared to have Roman mouldings.

THE Dungeon or Keep of the present castle, is believed to have been founded in the Saxon times. The zig-zag fretwork round the Arch that leads

leads into the Inner Court, is evidently of Saxon architecture; and yet this was probably not the most ancient entrance; for under the Flag-Tower (before that part was taken down and rebuilt by the present duke, was the appearance of a Gateway that had been walled up, directly fronting the present Outward Gate into the town.

THIS Castle appears to have been a place of great strength immediately after the Norman conquest: for in the reign of King William Rufus, it underwent a remarkable siege from Malcolm III. king of Scotland, who lost his life before it, as did also Prince Edward his eldest son. The most authentic account of this event seems to be that given in the ancient Chronicle of Alnwick Abbey; of which a copy is preserved in the British Museum.* This informs us that the castle, although too strong to be taken by assault, being cut off from all hopes of succour, was on the point of surrendering, when one of the garrison undertook its rescue by the following stratagem: He rode forth completely armed, with the keys of the castle tied to the end of his spear, and presented himself in a suppliant manner before the king's pavilion, as being come to surrender up the possession. Malcolm too hastily came forth to receive him, and suddenly received a mortal wound. The assailant escaped by the fleetness of his horse through the river,

* Harl. MSS. No. 692, (12.) fol. 155.

river, which was then swollen with rains. The Chronicle adds that his name was Hammond*, and that the place of his passage was long after him named Hammond's Ford, probably where the bridge was afterwards built. Prince Edward, Malcolm's eldest son, too incautiously advancing to revenge his father's death, received a mortal wound, of which he died three days after. The spot where Malcolm was slain was distinguished by a cross, which has lately been restored by the present Dutchess, who is immediately descended from this unfortunate king, by his daughter Queen Maud, wife of King Henry the first of England; whose lineal descendants were, 1. The lady Mary Plantagenet, (daughter of Henry earl of Lancaster, grandson of King Henry III.) married to Henry Percy the third Lord of Alnwick; 2. The lady Elizabeth Mortimer (grand-daughter of Lionel duke

* Nothing can be more futile and erroneous, than the story told by Boetius and copied by other Scottish writers, that this soldier received the name of **PIERCY** from **PIERCING** the king's **EYE** with his spear, and was ancestor of the **PERCIES**, earls of Northumberland; whereas **WILLIAM DE PERCY**, the ancestor of this family, had come over with the Conqueror, and had founded Whitby Abbey, in Yorkshire, before the death of king Malcolm, as appears by the charter of foundation, which bears his name, and is printed in Dugdale's *Monasticon*, vol. I. p. 72. Indeed he received his name from his domain of **PERCY** in Lower Normandy, near St. Lo; nor had his descendants any connection with Northumberland, till the reign of King Edward I. as will be seen below.

duke of Clarence) wife of Hotspur; and, 3. The lady Eleanor Neville (grand-daughter of John of Gaunt) wife of the second earl of Northumberland.

IN the following century, another king of Scotland was taken prisoner besieging this castle. This was William III. commonly called the Lion; who having formed a blockade for some days, was surprised by a party of English, that had marched in the night to its relief, and coming suddenly on the king as he was reconnoitring the works at some distance from his camp, took him prisoner early in the morning of July 12, 1174. The captive monarch was sent first to Richmond, and afterwards into Normandy to King Henry II. A tradition has been preserved that the king was taken not more than a bow-shot from the castle, at a place formerly called Rotten-row, not far from the entrance on the Ride into Hulne Park.

To give compleat Annals of all the events that happened at, or near this Castle, would constitute too large a part of the Border History; and therefore it will be sufficient only to mention, at present, a remarkable retreat that was made from this castle, at the conclusion of the civil wars of York and Lancaster.

MARGARET of Anjou had introduced into this castle a garrison of three hundred Frenchmen. After the decisive battle of Towton, when the
victorious

victorious Yorkists proceeded to take possession of all the castles in the North; Margaret, who was anxious to preserve this garrison, applied to George Douglas, earl of Angus, who very gallantly undertook to bring them away. He accordingly advanced with ten thousand horsemen, and making show, as if he meant to charge the English army, which had invested the castle; while the latter formed themselves in line of battle, he brought up a party of his stoutest horses to the postern-gate, to whom the garrison made a sally, and every soldier mounting behind a trooper, (or as others say, on a number of spare horses brought purposely for them) the whole were securely conveyed into Scotland; the earl of Warwick, who commanded the English, being well satisfied to take possession of the deserted castle without bloodshed. It is believed that the garrison, before they retired, had endeavoured to destroy all the arms and ammunition which they could not carry off. Accordingly a few years ago, on opening the principal well in the inner ward, which had been long filled up, the workmen found in it a great number of cannon balls, of a very large size, such as were chiefly used after the first invention of gunpowder; and which, together with some other things of that kind, had probably been thrown into the well by this garrison. This retreat was made in Janua. r, 1461.

To

To remount back to the history of the proprietors of ALNWICK CASTLE: Before the Norman conquest, this castle, together with the barony of Alnwick, and all its dependencies, had belonged to a great baron, named Gilbert Tyfon, who was slain fighting along with Harold. His son William had an only daughter, whom the Conqueror gave in marriage to one of his Norman chieftains, named Ivo de Vescy, together with all the inheritance of her house. From that period the castle and barony of Alnwick continued in the possession of the lords de Vescy down to the time of king Edward I. In the 25th year of whose reign, anno Domini 1297, died lord William de Vescy, the last baron of this family; who having no legitimate issue, did, by the king's licence, infeoff Anthony Bec, bishop of Durham, and titular patriarch of Jerusalem, in the castle and barony of Alnwick. At the same time William gave to a natural son of his, named also William de Vescy, the manor of Hoton Buscel, in Yorkshire; which he settled absolutely on him and his heirs; appointing him, as he was then a minor, two guardians, whose names were Thomas Plaiz, and Geoffrey Gypylmer Clerk. [See Dugdale's Baronage, vol. I. p. 95, &c.]

THIS appointment, as also the very words of the deed of infeoffment, (still extant) in which the conveyance is to the bishop absolute and unconditional,

ditional, confute a report too hastily taken up by some historians, that this castle and barony were only given to the bishop in trust for William the bastard above-mentioned, and that he was guilty of a violation of this trust, in disposing of them otherwise.

In the bishop's possession the castle and barony of Alnwick continued twelve years, and were then by him granted and sold to the lord Henry de Percy, one of the greatest barons in the north, who had distinguished himself very much in the wars of Scotland, and whose family had enjoyed large possessions in Yorkshire from the time of the conquest. The bishop's deed bears date 19th Nov. 1309, and was no clandestine or obscure transaction, for the witnesses to it were some of the greatest personages in the kingdom, viz. Henry Lacy, earl of Lincoln; Robert de Umfreville, earl of Angus; Robert, lord Clifford, &c. The grant was afterwards confirmed by the king at Sheene, 23d Jan. 1310, (anno 3. R. Ed. II.) to Henry de Percy and his heirs; who, to remove every pretence of complaint, obtained a release of all right and title to the inheritance from the heir at law, Sir Gilbert de Aton, knight, who was the nearest legitimate relation to the lord William de Vescy, above-mentioned.

FROM that period Alnwick Castle became the great baronial seat in the North, of the lords de
 B Percy,

PERCY, and of their successors the earls of Northumberland; by whom it was transmitted down in lineal succession to their illustrious representatives, the present Duke and Dutcheſs of Northumberland.

IMMEDIATELY on its first acquisition, the lord Henry de Percy began to repair this Caſtle; and he and his ſucceſſors, afterwards earls of Northumberland, perfected and compleated both this citadel and its outworks.

THE two great Octagon Towers which were ſuperadded to the old Saxon Gateway afore-mentioned, and conſtitute the entrance into the Inner-Ward, were erected about the year 1350, by the ſecond lord PERCY of Alnwick, ſon to the former; who in 1327 had been appointed one of the 12 Barons, to whom the government of England was aſſigned during the minority of King Edward III.

THE Date of the erection of theſe two Towers is aſcertained very exactly by a ſeries of Eſcutcheons ſculptured upon them, which ſufficiently ſupply the place of an Inſcription: and it is very remarkable, that, although theſe towers have now ſtood upwards of 400 years, they have never received or wanted the leaſt repair.

THE ESCUTCHEONS are arranged in the following order:

I. A

I. A PLAIN shield with a bend: supposed to be the original arms of TYSON the proprietor of this castle in the Saxon times.

II. THE shield of VESCY, lord of Alnwick after the conquest, whose arms were *Or, a cross sable*.

III. CLIFFORD. Idonea, daughter of Robert, lord Clifford, was wife of Henry Percy, 2d lord of Alnwick, who built these towers. In colours it would be *Chequé or et azure, a fess gules*.

IV. PERCY, the proprietor and builder of the towers, viz. *Or, a lion rampant azure*.

BOHUN. William de Bohun, Earl of Northampton, was in 1350 made Lord Warden of the Marches, and so continued for two years after: viz. *Azure, a bend argent charged with three mullets sable, between 2 cotices and six lions rampant or*.

VI. PLANTAGENET. Mary, daughter of Henry Plantagenet, earl of Lancaster, and grandson of King Henry III. was wife of Henry Percy, 3d lord of Alnwick son to the founder of these towers: viz. *Gules, 3 lions rampant or, charged with a label of 5 points*.

IN the CENTER are the arms of the sovereign King Edward III. viz. France and England quarterly: France being then *Semé de fleurs de lis*.

VII. WARREN. Eleanor, daughter of John, Earl of Warren and Surrey, was wife of Henry, Lord Percy, the founder's grandfather: viz. *Chequé or et azure*.

VIII. ARUNDEL. Eleanor, daughter of John, Earl of Arundel, was the founder's mother; wife of Henry Percy, first Lord of Alnwick: viz. *Gules, a lion rampant or.*

IX. UMFREVILLE. Margaret Percy, one of the founder's daughters, was then married to Robert, son and heir of Gilbert de Umfreville, Earl of Angus: viz. *Azure, a cinque-foil or, between 6 croflets argent.*

X. PERCY again. Isabel Percy, another of the daughters was then unmarried. She was afterwards wife of William de Aton.

XI. NEVILLE. Maud Percy, the founder's eldest daughter, was wife of John lord Neville of Raby: viz. *Gules, a saltire argent.*

XII. FITZ-WALTER. Eleanor Percy, his second daughter, was married to John lord Fitz-Walter: viz. *Or, a fess between 2 chevrons gules.*

It deserves remark that the present Duke of Northumberland is by his grandmother, daughter of Marmaduke Lord Langdale, lineally descended from the two ladies last mentioned, and through them from the ancient Lords DE PERCY.

ALNWICK CASTLE contains about five acres of ground within its Outer Walls*, which are flanked with

* The Castle-Walls measure round the outside 2674 Feet.
—The Measure of the Walls round the outside of the Castle-Keep

with sixteen Towers and Turrets, that now afford a compleat sett of Offices to the Castle, and retain many of them their original names, as well as their ancient uses and destination. These are,

I. THE Great or Outward Gate of entrance, anciently called the Utter-Ward.

II. THE Garner or Aveners Tower : behind which are the Stables, Coach-houses, &c. in all respects suitable to the magnitude and dignity of this great castle.

III. The Water-Tower ; containing the cistern or reservoir that supplies the castle and offices with water.—Adjoining to this is the Laundry, &c.

IV. THE Caterer's Tower ; adjoining to which are the Kitchens, and all conveniencies of that sort.

BEHIND the adjacent walls are concealed a compleat sett of Offices and Apartments for most of the principal Officers and Attendants in the castle : —Together with a large Hall, or Dining-Room, to entertain the tenants at the audits ; with an Office for the Auditors, House-keeper's Room ; and underneath these, a Servants-hall, with all other suitable conveniencies.

V. THE

Keep or Citadel is 724 feet 10 inches.—The Inner Court within the Citadel, measures round the Walls 316 feet, 2 inches.

V. THE Middle Ward.

VI. THE Auditor's Tower.

VII. THE Guard-House.

VIII. THE East-Garret.

IX. THE Record's Tower ; of which the lower story contains the Evidence-Room, or great Repository of the Archives of the Barony : over it is a Circular Apartment designed and executed with great taste and beauty for a Banqueting Room, being 29 feet diameter, and 21 feet 6 inches high.

X. THE Ravine Tower or Hotspur's Chair. Between this and the Round Tower was formerly a large Breach in the walls, which for time immemorial had been called by the town's people, the Bloody Gap.

XI. THE Constable's Tower ; which remains chiefly in its ancient state, as a specimen how the castle itself was once fitted up.

XII. THE Postern Tower, or Sally Port. The Upper Apartments now contain old armour, arms, &c. The lower story has a small Furnace and Elaboratory for chymical or other experiments.

Between this, and the Tower next mentioned is a Battery of . . . Guns, which commands the Bridge, &c.

XIII. THE Armourer's Tower.

XIV. THE Falconer's Tower.

XV. THE

XV. THE Abbot's Tower ; so called either from its situation nearest to Alnwick Abbey, or from its containing an apartment for the Abbot of that monastery whenever he retired to the castle.

XVI. THE West-Garret.

THE Castle properly consists of three Courts or Divisions ; the entrance into which was defended with three strong massy Gates ; called the Utterward, the Middle-ward, and the Inner-ward. Each of these Gates was in a high embattled Tower, furnished with a Portcullis, and the Outward Gate with a Draw-bridge also : they had each of them a Porter's Lodge, and a strong Prison, besides other necessary apartments for the Constables, Bailiffs, and subordinate officers. Under each of the Prisons was a deep and dark Dungeon, into which the more refractory prisoners were let down with cords, and from which there was no exit but through the trap door in the floor above. That of the Inner Ward is still remaining in all its original horrors.

THIS castle, like many others in the North, was anciently ornamented with Figures of Warriors, distributed round the battlements, and therefore the present noble proprietors have allowed them to be continued, and have supplied some that had been destroyed, but to shew what they once were ;
and,

and, that this is no innovation, they have retained the ancient ones, tho' defaced, which were placed at the top of the two Octagon Towers.

FROM length of time, and the shocks it had sustained in ancient wars, this Castle was become quite a ruin, when by the death of Algernon duke of Somerset, it devolved, together with all the estates of this great barony, &c. to the present Duke and Duchess of Northumberland; who immediately set to repair the same, and with the most consummate taste and judgement restored and imbellished it, as much as possible, in the true Gothic stile; so that it may deservedly be considered as one of the noblest and most magnificent models of a great Baronial Castle.

NOTHING can be more striking than the effect at first entrance within the walls from the town, when through a dark gloomy Gateway of considerable length and depth, the eye suddenly emerges into one of the most splendid scenes that can be imagined; and is presented at once with the great body of the Inner Castle, surrounded with fair semi-circular Towers, finely swelling to the eye, and gaily adorned with Pinnacles, Figures, Battlements, &c.

THE impression is still further strengthened by the successive entrance into the second and third Courts, thro' great massy Towers, till the stranger is landed in the Inner Court, in the very center of this great Citadel.

HERE

HERE he enters to a most beautiful Stair-Cafe, of a very singular yet pleasing form, expanding like a fan : the cornice of the ceiling is enriched with a series of 120 Escutcheons, displaying the principal quarterings and intermarriages of the Percy family. The space, occupied by this stair-case, is 46 feet long, 35 feet 4 inches wide, and 43 feet 2 inches high.

THE first room that presents to the left, is the Saloon, which is a most beautiful apartment, designed in the gayest and most elegant style of Gothic architecture ; being 42 feet 8 inches long, 37 feet 2 inches wide, and 19 feet 10 inches high.

To this succeeds the Drawing-Room, consisting of one large oval, with a semi-circular projection, or bow-window. It is 46 feet 7 inches long, 35 feet 4 inches wide, and 22 feet high.

HENCE the transition is very properly to the great Dining-Room ; which was one of the first executed, and is of the purest Gothic, with Niches and other ornaments, that render it a very noble model of a great Baron's-Hall. In this room was an irregularity in the form, which has been managed with great skill and judgement, and made productive of beauty and convenience. This was a large Bow-Window, not in the center, but towards the upper end, which now affords a very agreeable recess when the family dines alone, or for a second table at the great public dinners.

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This

This room is 53 feet 9 inches long, 20 feet 10 inches wide, (exclusive of the circular recess, which is 19 feet in diameter) and 26 feet 9 inches high.

FROM the dining-room, the stranger may either descend into the Court, by a Circular Stair-case, or he is ushered into a very beautiful Gothic apartment over the Gateway, commonly used for a Breakfast or Supper-Room : this is furnished with closets in the Octagon Towers, and is connected with other Private Apartments. It is 38 feet 3 inches long, 24 feet 3 inches wide, and 16 feet 1 inch high.

HENCE the stranger is conducted into the Library, which is a very fine room, in the form of a parallelogram, properly fitted up for Books, and ornamented with stucco-work in a very rich Gothic style ; being 63 feet 8 inches long, 22 feet 2 inches wide, and 16 feet 1 inch high. This apartment leads to

THE Chapel ; which fills all the upper space of the Middle Ward. Here the highest display of Gothic ornaments in their greatest beauty has been very properly exhibited ; and the several parts of the chapel have been designed after the most perfect models of Gothic excellence. The great Window is taken from one of the finest in York-minster. The Ceiling is borrowed from that of King's-college in Cambridge ; and the Walls are painted after the great church in Milan : but the Windows of Painted Glass will be in a stile superior

rior to any thing that has yet been attempted, and worthy of the present more improved state of the arts. Exclusive of a beautiful Circular Recess for the family, the Chapel is 50 feet long, 21 feet 4 inches wide, and 22 feet high.

RETURNING from the Chapel through the Library, and passing by another great Stair-Case, (that fills an oval space of 22 feet 9 inches long, and 15 feet 3 inches wide,) we enter a Passage or Gallery which leads to two great State Bed-chambers, each 30 feet long, most nobly furnished, with double dressing-rooms, closets and other conveniences, all in the highest elegance and magnificence, but as conformable as possible to the general stile of the Castle. From these Bed-Chambers the passage opens to the grand Stair-Case, by which we first entered, and compleats a tour not easily to be paralleled.

